

about ridding the world of Jews. Genocide was not something new to the bourgeois world but this time they had at their disposal a factory system for disposing of unwanted races. When war broke out in 1939 Hitler and his cohorts accelerated their attempts to wipe out the Jews even when it was obvious that no economic gains were to be made in wartime from such acts. But there were economic gains to be made from prosecuting the war itself not only by Germany but all other nations. Thus all the combatants set about slaughtering the world working class just as had happened in 1914-18. Workers died fighting for the "volk", the "socialist fatherland" and "democracy". Whichever camp they found themselves in the end result was the same namely, defence of capitalism. Thus when the Allied Powers point the finger at the crimes of Nazism they conveniently forget, or rather hide the millions they killed on the battlefields of Europe, in Dresden, Hamburg, Berlin, Nagasaki, Hiroshima etc. They would have us believe that the ultimate sign of their humanity was development of the Atom Bomb and the destruction of thousands of lives in Japan. And they dare to accuse their fellow butchers of crimes against humanity.

Since the war and the victory of Democracy and Socialism over the Nazi enemy it has been business as usual, indeed it is a bit of a misnomer to speak of the "end of the war" for since 1945 there has never been a moment when capitalists have not been engaged in some bloody struggle somewhere in the world. Certainly the heartlands of capital have not themselves experienced war but what does this prove? It no more shows a changed face of capitalism than did the "peace" in Europe during the scramble for Africa. For the moment the imperialist powers are facing each other at a distance. Like their 19th century counterparts today's capitalist regimes are quite happy to involve themselves in barbaric killing if it is in their interests. Look at some of the more choice wars of the last forty years: Korea, Vietnam, Biafra, Middle-East and the smaller "policing" affairs such as Malaya, Suez, Afghanistan and Algeria. The bourgeoisie, East and West will stop at nothing to gain their ends, there are no means they will not use to secure victory. In Vietnam the Americans used chemical weapons as does Russia in Afghanistan; in Latin America the Americans employ death squads to establish their own brand of Justice (Barbie it seems could not give up his old habits of killing and played an active part in organising these squads in Bolivia, with CIA help); torture and execution are the basic tools of capital today. If the bourgeoisie are as humanitarian as they claim why, when crops are destroyed etc. as a part of government policy to keep the price up, are there so-called natural disasters like the famine in Africa. Only at the simplest of levels can these be said to be "natural". They are, like the wars, the product of an inhuman system which is only concerned with the extraction of profit rather than the defence of human life.

For the past two decades we have witnessed the inexorable development of global economic crisis. This has slowly but surely brought greater violence to the working class in the heartlands of capital. Not only has the rate of exploitation grown but so also, as a "natural" concomitant, unemployment and its consequence, poverty. The only way that capitalism will be able to resolve the mounting economic problems will be to gear itself up for a new global war. The next time round it will

have at its disposal weapons of such a magnitude that any war fought with them will leave little left of the humanity which the bourgeoisie says it loves so dearly.

No, we are not fooled. The capitalist system has no humanity. The trial of Klaus Barbie was merely a hypocritical farce (this is not to denigrate his victims who testified in court; just as they were victims of Barbie so they have become victims of the lies of the system). We had the sight in Lyons of a bourgeois system holding up its own bloody hands in horror at the fact that it was faced with another butcher. It's not just that the bourgeoisie get upset at competition, it's also the fact that it is very useful to point



to some other regime and say, look at it it is evil incarnate. By setting Nazism up thus the victors of World War 2 could place an ideological cover over itself, hides its barbarism and thus helps blind the working class to the reality of the system.

Only the working class can bring humanity to the world. Only it has the ability to destroy the capitalist system and replace the commoditisation of human life with the values of a system which sees Man as the end. This new class-free world will not come into being automatically nor by default. It needs the working class and its political expressions to take the struggle directly to Capital. The proletarian revolution will not be a pacifist affair. The class violence of the bourgeoisie will be opposed by that of the working class. But unlike that of its enemy that of the proletariat will be a moment in, a necessary part of the liberation of mankind from the thrall of the class system.

Flett

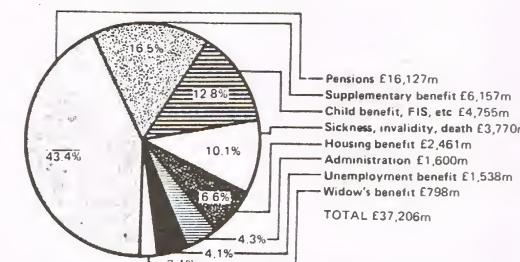
The Attack on Working Class Housing and Benefits

In the past few months, and, largely unreported due to the imminence of the General Election, the government have taken a number of decisive steps to expand the attacks they already engaged in on the 'social wage' of the working class. Hidden by the smokescreen of the election and confident of re-election the Tories have fleshed out previously vague statements on the operation of the DHSS and Public Sector Housing with the clear intention of further reducing public expenditure and exposing more and more workers to the marginalisation of abject poverty. Simultaneously they are testing out public reaction to even newer policies such as the replacement of rates with a poll tax as a launching pad for even further attacks.

In Bulletin Nine in Autumn 1985 we talked about the "Time Bomb" that threatens the State in the form of a potential explosion of expenditure under the Welfare State system and their plans to eliminate such costs as far as was possible by the progressive - and in the case of the Tories - rapid dismantling of the system set up forty odd years ago. As we said in that article. (Welfare State - What Next?)....

What then is this massive expenditure, this nightmare that the bourgeoisie is desperately seeking a solution to. The social security budget is by far the largest spending programme. It constitutes 30% of all public expenditure and almost tops £40 billion making it larger than the Defence, Health and Housing budgets put together. 20 million people in Britain are its direct 'beneficiaries'. With a total spending budget in 1984-85 of £38,391,000,000 the pattern of the expenditure can be seen from the diagram below.

How the money goes on the welfare state



Source: The Government's Expenditure Plans 1984-85 to 1986-87, Cmnd 9143-II 1984, Table 2.12

As can be seen almost half of all social security spending goes on the elderly, the unemployed and families with children get a further third, split equally between them while the disabled and long-term sick get a tenth. But it is not just the colossal size of this 'enforced' expenditure which alarms the bourgeoisie.

Social security has been one of the fastest growing spending programmes in recent years. Ten years ago

it took up 20% of total public spending: now it forms more than 30%, and unless something is done say the bourgeoisie, its share will rise by a further 1% every three years.

In cash terms it has risen more than sixfold since 1973-4 and even taking inflation into account over that period this still represents a 68% rise in costs. Three main areas account for this rise in costs: Child Benefit, Pensions and Unemployment Benefit. The first represents a simple, but effective, swindle by the government who in 1977 introduced the Child Benefit system replacing family allowances and tax allowances for children. By 1979 when the changeover was complete the cost of child benefit had been "added" to public spending at an estimated cost of £2,364,000,000 while, if there were comparable savings in tax, they demonstrably failed to appear as tax cuts

The second cause, pensions reflects the rise during the Seventies of the number of pensioners. In 1973-4 there were 7,750 Million people in Britain entitled to retirement pension. In 1984-5 this has risen to 9,260 Million boosting the cost of Social Security by at least 10%, assuming no increase in the cost of benefit.

Most important of all unemployment has hit record levels. At the end of 1973 there were barely half a million registered unemployed. Between 1979 and 1982 this leapt from 560,000 to 1.7 Million and the numbers on the dole have continued to rise to well over 3 Million today. The cost in unemployment benefit during the jump from 79 to 82 was the leap from £705 Million to £4865 Million. Taking other costs like Supplementary Benefit, Housing Benefit into account the cost of unemployment benefit on the social security budget leapt from £364 Million in 1973-4 to £1370 Million in 1978-9 to £6540 Million in 1984-5.

These three factors account for 69% of the increase in the social security budget. But of course this isn't the end of the story. Increasing pauperisation of the working class will continue to increase the demand for Child Benefit, it is expected that the total number of people of pensionable age will continue to rise from 10.1 Million in 1981 to 10.5 Million in 1991.

In addition the number of persons entitled to pensions will also rise as married wives become entitled to pensions in their own right by dint of entering the pension system for contributions made during the past 40 years. The government themselves estimate that the number of persons of pensionable age will rise by 600,000 by the end of the century.

Lastly unemployment levels. The government's own predictions for public consumption reflect the desperate hopes of the bourgeoisie for a road out of the mire of economic collapse and propose a growth rate of 2 1/2% per annum for the five years to 88-89 followed by a rate of growth of between 1 1/2% and 2% in the five years following. They also hope for a productivity rise of 2%. Even these rosy pictures indicate that there will be no drop in the rate of unemployment.

In reality of course, as the bourgeoisie know full well, the continuing crisis and the continued attack on the proletariat is bound to create more and more unemployment, and thus, at present levels, a greater and greater public expenditure on social security payments to a growing mass of unemployed people and their dependants - if the system remains as it is.

Faced with such a situation, the British bourgeoisie in the late Seventies began to prepare contingency plans to solve this 'problem' as part of a generalised onslaught on the living standards of the British working class, in search of the mythical 'return to profitability'.

We traced the 'lead-in' approach to change pioneered by the government which allowed 'loony right' scary solutions to be floated, ridiculed and disowned, then later introduced once everyone had got used to them. Here also we argued, was one of the crucial methods of attack of the bourgeoisie, concentrating their fire on particular small, weak, not to say helpless groups in Society. As we said:

Up until now, the attack, like the attack on the Health Services, where they have been across the board, have been carefully orchestrated with massive ideological backup and camouflaged behind 'loss-leaders' and cosmetic exercises like the pensioners' Xmas bonus. Where they have gone beyond this they have gone for specific low profile groups already atomised by unemployment, isolated, with no political voice, even in bourgeois terms, and with no political pull with this administration - predominantly the young, the single and the homeless. For it is instructive to look at how the cuts in the social wage, in benefits have affected certain groups like this, before the Green Paper, to see the extent of the attack prepared for the rest of us.

What I want to emphasise here is the fact that by looking at the depth and scale of the cuts perpetrated on such weak groups we can see what is planned for the rest of us. For, just as in every other area of attack the bourgeoisie has been trying out not merely its method of assault but also the depth of the attack on small weak groups PRIOR to trying them out in method and scale on larger concentrations of workers which it MUST attack in the future. Thus a detailed look at how, for example the young, the single and the homeless have been battered is not merely an exercise in the description of bourgeois brutality but is also an object lesson on the means they plan to use for the rest of those workers claiming, the pensioners, the unemployed etc etc.

The article then went on in detail to expose the attack on the young and homeless who as the TIMES pointed out:

"The elderly not only have votes and lobbyists but a range of formidable allies including several of the most venerable attractions of the upper House of Parliament. Children have no votes; they rely shakily on politicians' sense of family. When children become adolescents, their political interest declines even further, until they become old enough to vote."

We commented on the appearance of a Green Paper on the Social Security system, tentatively produced to see what reaction its proposals would elicit from the 'poverty lobby'. *et alia* and curiously vague so that, once approved by Parliament, they could be fleshed out and set in operation without further notification.

With the media fixated by the election carnival, the Social Fund Manual, bastard son of the Green Paper has duly appeared - and it was a shocker.

The 'Poverty Lobby' who should, after all, be used to this by now, has declared itself aghast calling it:

"harsh, inconsistent and unworkable."

The DHSS Unions whose workers will have to implement it and suffer the increasing attacks of its pauperised recipients has termed it:

"inhumane, unfair and inappropriate."

The British Association of Social Workers, who are to be given a role in the implementation of the new system says it confirms their worst fears:

"What is proposed is an unseemly debate about which poor people should and which poor people should not have access to an increasingly pitiful and stigmatised income."

These professionals are not just aghast at what is proposed but at the fact that it is they who will have to implement the new system. They are, however, no matter how aghast, unlikely to carry out mass resignations let alone class actions to stop these changes. As is the wont with the 'caring' professions, they will knuckle under and police the proletarians who will suffer.

For suffer we will. The existing system of Social Security, composed of weekly Supplementary Benefit at an abysmal rate supplemented by a system of Single Payments to cover specific requirements which cannot be met out of non-existent savings or from the weekly benefit will now be replaced by Income Support (Sup. Ben. at a lower level and reaching fewer people in order to force people back to work) and a system of government loans, repayable from benefit replacing the single payments system with grants available only to a very few and at a pitiful level. The new system has as its purpose not the 'reform' of the Social Security system as Fowler would have us believe, but the massive reduction in government spending necessary to defuse the 'bomb' allowing the elimination of one whole sector of DHSS spending and a continuing drastic cut in the social wage of a class increasingly thrown onto the DHSS system. Not only will this save the state money but it will also discipline those workers already battered by the brutality of

**It really
depends
on what
you mean
by the
breadline?**

Margaret Thatcher,
November 1983

the DHSS tending to demoralise them even more. The new system therefore continues the attack on the working class by once again selecting a ~~weak~~ sector and hammering them HARD. Only this time the State feels strong enough to extend the attack to everyone in the Social Security net.

The Social Fund Manual

The Social Fund Manual shows that the important Single Payment sector of the SS system will be replaced by essentially three provisions (sic)

1. Loans recoverable from weekly benefit to certain groups at present receiving Income Support.
2. Crisis Loans.
3. Grants to help people move out of institutional



Not Vulnerable Enough.

care into the community (where of course they will no longer get grants - only loans) or to those who would end up in institutionalised care if they didn't get the money; ie. grants will be given only to prevent greater expenditure which would be incurred if the person ended up in care.

When however we examine this meagre support further we find that those in category 3, the only ones who will get anything other than a repayable loan, are so tightly defined that the expenditure on them is likely to be minimal. The system thus stands revealed as a cost cutting exercise pushing the poorest sector of the working class into the all-encompassing morass of state debt, sinking them deeper and deeper into despair.

But no, they say they will also give minimal grants to families under stress...but:

"All families, especially those on low incomes face stress at various times; so that in itself is not a reason to give a grant." (SFM 7200)

Such families will only get a grant in cases of marital breakdown (but only once) or to help them move house if this is unavoidable (but only to connect up the gas and electricity and for the barest minimum of facilities). This is what they get at present under the Single Payments scheme and it is already grossly inadequate forcing mothers with children to live in conditions with inadequate clothing bedding and furniture.

Certain families may also get a grant to cover some of the costs of some redecoration if a 'disturbed' member of the family wrecks the family home and the alternative to such redecoration is taking that member into care. However they will only get the cost of materials unless they can prove that no one else, friends, relatives, neighbours or charitable body wont do the job when they may get help with the cost of actually doing the work. But, a grant will only be given at all if there are still other rooms undamaged and decorated which the 'disturbed' member of the family can use. One can imagine the scene: Dad, out of his wits with worry, deep in debt, wrecks the living room. Mum urges him on to wreck the bedroom as well otherwise the DHSS wont give them the miserable pittance they can get for materials if he only wrecks one room.

In exceptional cases grant may be allowed where the family has a disabled (mentally or physically) child. Rather than admit the child to care they will allow costs for such minor structural changes as are required to prevent this happening. They may even get some cash to buy the child clothes if they can prove that "the particular disability of... (the) child causes excessive wear and tear to such an extent...etc". However just in case this should appear too generous it goes on to say:

"..Grants for excessive wear and tear on clothing should be treated as low priority"

which of course means no priority at all.

Lastly vulnerable groups other than families may get a grant. Such groups are very tightly defined: the elderly, the mentally handicapped, the physically disabled and the chronically or terminally ill. These may ONLY get a grant if the alternative is a move to residential care (or expulsion from it) and must be sufficient ONLY to prevent such a move.

And these are the only groups who will get a half-penny from the state in future. Everyone else on the DHSS, so long as they fit the criteria (and there will be precious few that do) will get only repayable loans. The era of the state as money-lender has arrived.

The State as Moneylender.

Certain very narrowly defined groups on Income Support will be able in circumstances of very great need only to apply for interest free loans which will be recoverable from their weekly benefit. This will not, as at present, be a right but will be at the discretion of the Social Security Office who will have regard to two criteria (other than that the applicant fits the criteria determining those able to be given loans)

1. That he has the cash available to lend. For the DHSS office will have a specific FIXED sum allocated to it for use as loans in any one year - a sum determined by the government inclusive of those previous loans already recouped and which total cannot be breached WHATEVER the need may be. How much cash for lending is available at any time will be the ultimate criteria as to whether a loan will be granted or not. If, in the last couple of months of the year a local office has lent out all its money then, no matter what the need, no further loans may be made. As the manual says:

" All levels of the organisation are.. expected to work with the budget allocations available."

2. That you fit into one of the 'priority' groups allowed to be considered for a loan and that the purpose of the loan fits the DHSS's criteria.

The items 'loanable' are divided into high, medium and low priority. The first covers essential household equipment, household repairs and removal expenses where the removal is considered essential as is the installation of a meter and reconnection charges. Medium priority covers HP debts and other items of expenditure not considered 'essential' by the DHSS while low priority covers such items as 'rent in advance' (often the only way someone can get a house), removal costs and leisure items (whatever they may be for someone on the Social).

Now given everything that has been said about the Social Fund it is extremely unlikely that any item of low priority will ever be lent any money and it is widely believed that such will be the demand and so low the amount allocated that it is unlikely that even those items and groups of medium priority will ever be funded.

But there are also priorities within those persons seeking such loans even if the reasons for the loan fit the high priority category. Thus:

"...a single 18 year old who is pregnant might be given a higher priority than an 18 year old who is not."

When one considers that we are talking about moneylending at no cost to the state and when we look at the 'acceptable' reasons for such loans to be made we cannot help but be astonished that such further gradations need to be made. That is until we realise that the loan system is not there to help anyone but to deter, to restrict the eligibility as much as possible so as to make it as difficult as possible for anyone, no matter how desperate they are to get even a loan. In short to ensure the allocation of as little cash as possible from even this recoverable 'service' to cut government expenditure as substantially as possible and to pauperise and humiliate those on the DHSS as much as possible by denying as many as possible even this spurious support.

Even where a positive indication of when a loan might be given as in the case of a disaster, when a 'crisis loan' may be lent the Manual, just in case we might think it is actually being helpful adds :

" The Crisis loan should be the only (my emphasis) means of avoiding serious damage or serious risk to the health or safety of the applicant or a member of the family."

In other words unless the disaster is overwhelming you wont even get a loan.

But even if you fulfil all these criteria you probably wont get a loan of a penny. If you have already had a loan in the past and are already paying that back out of your pittance from the DHSS at a rate - they suggest - of from 15% to 25% of your benefit (they suggest not more than 50% of your pocket money if you are institutionalised) then you may already be judged as someone who "plainly cannot afford a further loan." Thus, no matter how urgent your need, or your childrens' need, if you are assessed as unable to pay it back you wont get it. And, of course, since you dont fit the criteria for grant, you cant look there

for assistance. You will just have to do without, no matter how serious your or your children's situation is.

But there is more. If you have capital (not defined) of value £500 or more you wont get a loan. If you were one of the fortunate few capable of getting a grant and have "capital resources.. exceeding £500" you wont get that either. Nowhere is "capital resources" defined so it is quite conceivable that it could include all those 'non-essential' belongings you have, like furniture.. or, well you name it. At one point the Manual seems to imply that such resources even include potential sources of loans already available and suggests that you should exhaust them before becoming eligible for a loan from the Social Fund. In spreading the state's munificence to those forced to travel to see dying relatives it suggests that one should remember that such things can be paid for by cheque or credit card - ie suggests that while someone has the availability of loan finance from these sectors they can continue to be excluded from the Social Fund, notwithstanding the validity of the reason for application for a loan, even by the Manual's warped criteria. Thus an already frightening situation of debt for someone on the DHSS should get worse by increasing debt to the bank or the Credit company rather than burden the DHSS.

This is thus an assault on a particularly weak section of the working class - and with a vengeance. Yet another step in the direction already outlined by Keith Joseph when he said:

" Inasmuch as personal responsibility has been eroded by a shift of housing, education and welfare provision excessively to the state, we are trying to shift that balance."



Down at the D.H.S.S.

Simultaneously therefore a major step in withdrawing state expenditure from the Social Security system while continuing to reduce the weekly benefit payment from its present meagre pittance, both having the additional effect of pauperising larger and large groups of the working class, marginalising and demoralising them by means of this fiscal lobotomy, forcing them either into rock bottom jobs at rock bottom wages or into non-political despair.

The Attack on Housing.

This is merely though an extension of the pattern we first pointed out in *Bulletin Nine*, a systematic attack on a particular section of the class. However so confident are the bourgeoisie that, even before the election they were preparing to expand the numbers of those considered sufficiently marginalised, and thus ripe for further attack. For years they had been weakening those living in Public Sector housing by a combination of financial controls which prevented the



effective repair of their houses which had by 1987 produced a public sector with a horrendous level of defects, and a progressive weaning of those able to get out towards buying their houses and thus out of the public sector altogether leaving a rump in rapidly decaying accommodation. On the building side the state has been progressively starving local authorities of the funds to build new homes and thus hugely expanding the queues of applicants for housing and forcing those housing agencies they have more direct control over such as Housing Associations, to seek funding from the private sector. With Spring 1987 all these facets came together into a coherent policy which shows where the government want to go. They have come about their new strategy by testing out different elements of it in different places at different times, hiding some elements from some areas and others from others so that any opposition, even from within their own ranks has been confused. In England the push to private sector finance has been backed up with the demand that Rent Officers amend the basis upon which they assess a 'fair rent': ie move it upwards as high as possible so that the return on their investment demanded by the private investors doesn't mean too massive a jump in the rents demanded for whatever new housing is built. Even so so as to claim to be housing the same people as they were with public sector finance they have had to bridge the resultant rent gap with public funds in the form of Housing Grant, loudly proclaiming that this would continue and that as a result the 'Assured Rental' agreed with the funder is equivalent to the mortgage on the cash he has provided only and at a level not staggeringly higher than the original likely rent if the flat had been built totally in the public sector (though still much higher than a local authority flat or even one with a rent level assessed by the Rent Officer).

Now, however this 'grant' figleaf has been blown away by the publication of their plans for Scott-

land in the form of a document called "Scottish Homes". Now here we have yet another example of the use of Scotland as a 'loss leader'. The Tories know that electorally they are on a hiding to nothing in Scotland and the administration of their 'colonial' Governor General Malcolm Rifkind betrays an attitude of 'couldn't care less'. The Labour Party which runs local government in Scotland is aghast at the deindustrialisation being organised by Thatcher and are seeking to save as much of the industrial infrastructure as possible and are resisting policies which alienate them from their 'constituency' in local

Our goal is to make Britain the best housed nation in Europe

Tory Manifesto, June 1983

government. Thus, against the national trend support for the Tories has collapsed in Scotland and support for Labour has rocketed since 1983, which was itself an advance on previous years. Nothing the Tories could do will change this since Scotland is precisely the kind of place where the programme of deindustrialisation will have greatest effect. They thus feel no qualms about implementing their policies in the most blatant and brutal manner there. They can thus carry on with relative impunity with no real electoral cost and they can gauge the kind of reaction such policies will create elsewhere by comparing the effect in the locale where they are most opposed allowing assessments of how to proceed in England to be based on real experience in Scotland.

The document *Scottish Homes* basically sets out to show how public sector housing in Scotland will be rapidly and progressively eliminated. The last decade has seen the gradual/rapid reduction in such expenditure but now the absolute elimination of it is on the cards. We see the same thrust as in England towards the involvement of private finance but there is now the declaration that in normal circumstances the grant 'bridge' will disappear, ie. the cost of building will be met by the private financier plus an element in the form of a low interest loan (ie mortgage finance) provided by the government through the organisation 'Scottish Homes'. This purports to allow the state to make:

"...a greater contribution to current needs in housing."

In effect the entire cost of building housing in the 'public sector' will be met by mortgage loans from the state, banks, building societies and private individuals and concerns. The document says:

"Support...will be given to landlords outside the public sector providing

or planning to provide rented accommodation."

The system of mortgage loans would be extended "to lend to any landlord."

Thus since such organisations and such landlords have to achieve an economic return on their investments the rental rate would be even higher than the present 'assured rent' level. Given the present 'low' rates of public sector rents in Scotland, most of which are well below even 'fair rent' levels the leap in rents necessitated by the new system will be enormous. Taking information from one city in Scotland, Aberdeen: local authority rents for a small flat of two apartments is of the order of £52 per month; a 'fair (sic) rental' for the same flat as assessed by the rent officer acting in the private sector or for a housing Association is around £70 to £80 plus rates per month but a rental based on mortgage finance would be at least equivalent to a staright tax assisted mortgage of about £200 to £240 per month plus rates. The gap is enormous and there is widespread belief that there will be massive upheaval from those on housing waiting lists. Nor will existing public sector tenants be excused the price hike. Their homes, due to the substantial cutbacks in repairs have been allowed to deteriorate and they are now being presented with the requirement to have their tenancies transferred to the private sector otherwise their homes will never be repaired. Rifkind declared recently that tenants would willingly pay more rent if it meant a better service. Under the new legislation they won't have much option. Ballots among tenants will determine a transfer to the private sector. If they ballot not to go they face continued deterioration in their rotting houses and flats. If they move - sky high rents. Those wishing to stay in the public sector who are in a minority in a ballot can stay with their council but the higher rent will still be charged to the council who can decide whether to pass it on to the tenant or not. Some choice!

And now Nicholas Ridley, the man who has been at the sharp end of every assault on working class standards of living for a decade has announced that the same system will eventually cover England too. In a recent clarification of the Tory manifesto he affirmed that:

"The Secretary of State will approve every transfer of local authority housing to the private sector."

though he was not yet prepared to admit that the grant available to allow assured rent levels would, as in Scotland be superceded by 'economic' rents based on private finance and government loans.

All this therefore constitutes a massive attack on the living standards of workers living in or seeking to live in rented housing. At a stroke the social wage element of subsidised housing is to be eliminated with only the dubious support of a rapidly devalued Housing benefit element left. When one adds the effect of other recent pieces of legislation such as the abandonment of Building Standards legislation which now allows the building of grossly substandard housing we can see that the housing of workers is going to simultaneously get scarcer, more inferior and much dearer in the years to come while allowing the state to save all (apart from certain types of very specialist provision for such as the mentally handicapped which could never turn a profit) the present cash it is forced to spend on such housing,



For increasingly, though with periods of relative stabilisation the government of this capitalist state, just like the governments of all other capitalist states, is faced with catastrophe; with a declining economy and a rising need for the preparations for World War Three, hence the attacks on the Health Service, Housing and the poor who, they think, haven't the will to fight back.

But such selective attacks, or attacks aimed, like the Health Service cuts, at the whole class, but on an individual basis, only felt when ill, or on specific sectors of the class isolated in their industries or factories like the Miners or the Steel workers by the Unions, are no longer enough. More and more the state is forced to launch attacks which cross industry boundaries, or which effect everyone at the same time. A recent example of this is the proposed imposition of a Poll Tax to replace the 'elderly' rates system. And once again Scotland has been singled out as a test bed for the reaction to such an imposition - and for the same reason.

The soon to come extension of Vat to all areas of expenditure and its 'harmonisation' at 20% or so is yet another example.

With an industrial base battered to hell by the crisis and given no respite by government policies business has been squealing loudly for years now



What a Joker This Man Is!

that rates are crippling their ability to get out of trouble and quote the record number of bankruptcies to support their argument. And it is this problem which the replacement of rates by a poll tax is designed to solve rather than the equalisation of cost and all the other guff that the government has put out to justify the change

equalization of responsibility and cost among all those in a locale and all the other guff that the government has put out to justify the change which the state seeks to address. They simply must cut the cost to industry. And the solution, since they

cant simply write off the income, is to transfer it to the existing rate payer, but not on a proportional basis as in the existing rates system where those living in larger houses pay proportionally more but as far as possible onto the backs of the working class. Thus everyone will pay the same amount whether they earn £100,000 in the City or £50 as a cleaner. In Scotland there are various estimates of how much will be paid but the President of the Rating and Valuation Association recently estimated it at £250 per adult while COSLA recently suggested it would be in the region of £420 per person. As the former put it

"What will happen when young single people get bills of say £250 for community charge and households with three adults realise that collectively they are to pay 50% more in local taxes."

Nationally he considered that over 13.7 million people would have to pay more than they do at present as a household in rates and predicted an uprising in Scotland when it was introduced in 1989. If only he was correct.

But whatever happens this substantial increase in taxation will fall disproportionately on the working class and thus constitutes yet one more attack on our living standards and our ability to survive.

And Labour...?

Throughout all this of course Labour have gleefully

pointed the finger at the Tories. While, however, condemning the social security cuts and the rise in rent levels and the imposition of the poll tax, they have been, understandably reluctant to identify what they would have done. Fortunately for them, their failure to become the government relieves them of the necessity to come up with 'better' solutions. For the fact is that they accept that these problems exist just like the Tories. The 'time bomb' of benefits terrifies them just as much as the Tories, they have been as laudatory as their opponents about the involvement of private finance in housing and though they are at present railing against the poll tax they have on numerous occasions declared the rating system to be a mess and unduly punitive on industry. Let us have no illusions that if Labour had won the election they would, in the defence of the bourgeoisie's interests have developed policies equally bad for the working class.

Whoever had won the attack on the working class would have gone on. For there is no alternative for the bourgeoisie in Britain, just as there is no alternative for them worldwide. Only by fighting back against these and all the other attacks can we halt them and transform our defensive struggle into an attack on the whole rotting monolith that is capital in the era of decay.

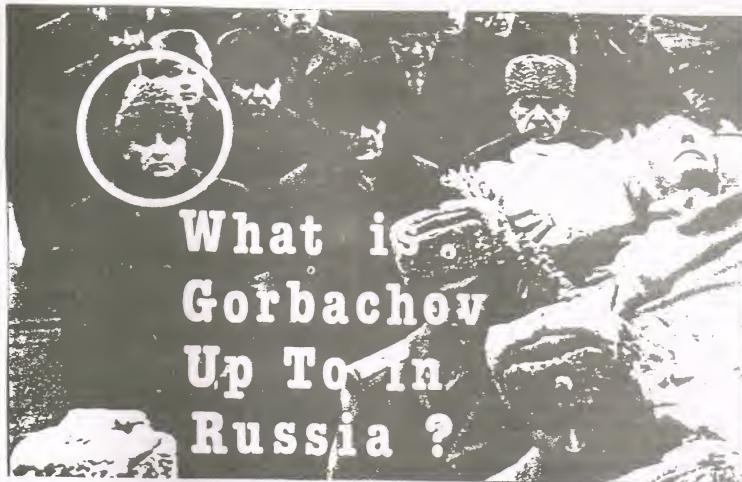
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TRANSLATE?

The C.B.G. desperately needs the services of translators.

We would like to make our material available to non-speakers of English. we would like to be able to have some of the material being produced by fractions of the proletarian movement in other languages accessible to us and, in our attempts to learn from the experience of the revolutionary movement of the past, we would very much like to be able to have much of the material that exists in French German, Dutch and especially Russian translated into English.

If any reader feels he can help us in this task we would urge them to contact us at our group address.



What exactly is this man Gorbachov up to? For the past three decades at least a whole coterie, a procession of western academics, have made substantial livings poring through the entrails of Kremlin gossip in often despairing attempts to predict the course of events in Russia so that their masters, the Generals of NATO and the gangsters of Downing Street and the White House would be better able to confront their mirror image, capitalist monolith in Russia. And then unheralded by all bar a few along comes Gorbachov and - seemingly - upsets the apple cart. For a start he doesn't look as if he has both feet in the grave already, he can confront dumbo Reagan at Reykjavik. And as if this wasn't enough he spends his first year turfing out anyone and everyone who opposes him from their positions of power and replaces them with men willing to talk 'Glasnost' and 'Pererstoika'. Glasnost? He puts this as a mixture of Karl Marx and the Holy Grail - all things to all men. Democracy, no more hacks getting 110% of the popular vote in elections, openness, reappraisal of the past and change for the future in Russia, freedom for enterprises to compete, more goods in the shop to buy, universal peace with the Americans - indeed the millennium. What in hell is going on? Has the Russian bourgeoisie, one of the nastiest bunches of thugs in the history of mankind, had a collective brain transplant. Is Stalin turning in his grave? The KGB, fresh from a lifetimes work of torture, concentration camps, psychiatric wards and a bullet in the back of the neck in a blood stained cellar preaching freedom, criticism and democracy? Is this particularly repulsive leopard changing its spots? In a word - no!

What is going on in Russia just now has to be understood as the last (?) desperate throw of a capitalist economy deep in crisis. Just as the Western bourgeoisie has, internationally, been forced to 'democratise' such hell-holes as the Phillipines and now Korea and is still trying to persuade the South African bourgeoisie to follow suit, so too the Russian bourgeoisie is having a go at surviving in a changing world too. This isn't the first attempt since Khruschev in the Fifties indicated the desperate state of Russia's problems but it is certainly the most far-reaching; and it is far-reaching because it is too late.

Just like the capitalist economies in the West the Russian economy's fundamental drive is the drive for surplus value. However just as in the west capitalism is in its decadent period and is faced with the contradiction that this fundamental drive becomes self-contradictory. However, the specific manner in which this contradiction becomes manifest in Russia - which is an integral part of a world capitalist economy - is fundamentally related to the origins of the present capitalist state there. To quote Ticktin, one of the very few western observers who have over the past two decades had any idea of what was really going on in Russia;

"The central economic feature of the USSR today is its enormous wastefulness."

This wastefulness, ultimately rooted in a low organic composition of capital and an inability to transcend it, stems directly from the emergence of Capitalist Russia from the defeat of the wave of proletarian revolution after World War One, from the defeat of the proletariat in Russia and Stalin's brutal accumulation drive in the Twenties and Thirties.

An example: At one time Russia was (and possibly still is) the world's largest producer of steel. However this steel was of such low quality that all it is good for is the construction of more low grade steel mills which make more and more low grade steel. A simply enormous percentage of everything produced in Russia is so poorly made and constructed of such shoddy materials that it is practically useless very soon after it is sold. As long ago as 1959 a Russian economist, Academician Kantorovich estimated that the waste of resources was so great that a 30-50% increase in production would follow the introduction of a less 'irrational' economic system. If a Russian economist estimates 50% the reality is likely to have been 150-200%.

This waste of resources manifests itself in three main ways. Firstly there is the basic factor of low quality production. It is not merely that Russian consumer goods last less long than Western goods but also that producer goods too are woefully

inefficient. Many more people in Russia are employed in the repair and maintenance of machinery for example than in its construction and notwithstanding exhortations from the state this fundamental fact remained unaltered for decades. Thus the State-Union Tractor Institute estimates that 2 to 2½ times the original cost of a tractor is spent on repairing it during its short lifespan of only eight years. Such low quality production feeds a demand for more and more goods to be produced and as one commentator has said : "an insatiable demand for spare parts."

Secondly in such circumstances new technology is only very slowly introduced. Since production by the plan is the norm, centrally controlled as to the number of items produced there is a positive disincentive to introduce new technology since it invariably disrupts production. Even more the enclosed system, the international irrelevance of the rouble means that the prime source of new technology, the west, is too expensive, and so little new technology finds its way past the Military and Space sectors, to be employed in the more mundane tasks of producer and consumer goods production. Further it is only financially feasible where labour costs can be cut. And this leads us to the third source of waste, the gigantic number of people in Russia who are underemployed. In the Sixties Soviet economists bravely estimated that some fifteen million people could be effectively removed from production the effect of which would be to leave production unaffected, or even increase it. At that time this represented 25% of production workers. Since then the percentage has risen.

Why then this waste, why this stagnant declining economy. When Stalin and the new bourgeoisie in the Twenties and Thirties embarked on the programme of accumulation based on slave labour, state terror and the proliferation of labour camps it did so on the basis of the massive production of producer goods, more railways, more steel mills, more of everything that made things than could make more things that could make more.... Since all this was carried on under the control of the GPU those actually doing the work in these appalling circumstances were paid a pittance where they were paid at all. By the end of World War Two and the process of reconstruction that followed there was still this massive production of producer goods but the technology had hardly changed. Where it had this was, by and large, concentrated on those industries under military discipline, where the goods were primarily for the military or the space programmes, in direct competition with the West. Even in good years there was precious little to aid the development of new technology elsewhere. The vast majority of Russian production workers were, and are, still in large industrial enterprises which had hardly changed since the Thirties, though there was less direct police control and the pay off was the, hopefully, increasing amounts of cheap food available. The amount of consumer goods available was practically nil. About 60% of an average worker's wage goes on food compared with 20% in, say, Britain. The safety net in this situation was that every worker was employed. In other words there was enough food but precious little else but it was available to everyone. However no goods to buy means absolutely no incentive to increase production at all since whatever money got from such couldnt realistically be spent on anything except more food, if it was available, or vodka, which wasnt rationed. For most of the population two things were, and are,

more important than money, the right contact to obtain food and time to spend in the interminable queues to buy the food. Speedups, bonus systems all the paraphanalia of modern factory systems in the West therefore place no incentive in the Russian worker. He has absolutely no incentive to work any harder than he has to. There is therefore slack discipline and timekeeping in Russian industry because the working class will accept nothing less in exchange for what they get for their work.

If you like, the deal between the classes struck in the Thirties had been - food and work if you work to build up Russian industry. This ground to a halt in the Fifties when after reconstruction and in direct competition with the West whose technology was racing ahead, Russian Bourgeoisie, for these historic reasons was unable to improve its technological capacity across its industrial base so as to compete on the world market.

There is thus a simple contradiction here for the Russian bourgeoisie. If they can extract more surplus from the workers they can reconstruct and upgrade their industry across the board to a higher technological level. But this needs the worker to work harder and more efficiently. But with nothing to offer the working class in return, nothing to buy with the increased wages they can promise, they cannot transform industry to produce even those goods which might persuade the workers, let alone those goods to be able to compete with the West. In effect the route of carrot was closed to them if they maintained the system. The alternative was the stick. ie make millions unemployed dragoon the rest into working harder by fear of unemployment and pauperisation. ie. back to Stalin. Now social control in Russia is, to a very large extent, based on terror, not exclusively, but to a very large extent and the Russian bourgeoisie were, and are, terrified that a return to the tactics of the period of accumulation under Stalin in a society now denuded of its peasantry and with its workers largely in huge industrial enterprises, would produce social protest of such a scale as to threaten the system and their rule itself.

The nub, as Khruschev saw it was to produce more consumer goods to incite the workers into compliance and the history of economic and social policy in Russia for the past thirty years has been of successive attempts to square this circle. Thus just like every other capitalist state in the period of decadence they have been increasingly desperately searching for a way out. One major trend, which has only recently been relegated to the sidelines (as we shall see below), has consistently argued that the Stalinist solution was still available. Back to the concentration camp! this was the group which ended the Khruschevite experiment claiming that society wasnt strict enough and that the role of the secret police wasnt hard enough. More terror was needed to force the workers to work harder. However as the Novosibirsk economist Aganbegyan (whom we shall meet later again) argued at the time, the Stalinist economic system could be made to work during a reign of terror but not after the terror has ended. It was OK for a subservient, obedient, passive, poorly educated working class fresh from the country where their neighbours had just been hustled off to the grave or the concentration camp. But it could not work with a proletariat already a generation in the factories and the cities.

The alternative proposed by him was, and is, in essence a move to a form of market economy. Even

after the fall of Khruschev who though keeping the system intact but trying to produce more consumer goods would do the trick, economists in the sixties especially in Novosibirsk, were pointing out the grave dangers of the decadence of the Russian economy. They explained the inability to produce more consumer goods:

". . . the external causes are not the main ones which lead to our difficult economic situation. The main causes are internal. Firstly the incorrect direction of the economic development of our country. Secondly the inadequacy of our system of planning incentives (my emphasis) and economic administration in relation to the demands of practical life."

(quoted in Socialist Commentary 1965.)

The long years of Brezhnev prevented at that time any further development in that direction at the price of letting sleeping dogs lie, ie allowing things to go on as before, stagnating and deteriorating. It was only with the appearance of Andropov in power that attempts were once again made to seek radical solutions to the problem. Unfortunately (for the Russian bourgeoisie) by the time he came to power, the goalposts had been moved, the situation was much more serious than it had been under Khruschev. By the early Eighties even Russian official figures were indicating only a 2-3% rise in GNP for the first three years of the decade with a projected inflation rate of 6%. Though the usual arguments raged, both east and west, about how reliable these figures were, what could not be denied was that the direction of the Russian economy was down and had been clearly downward for at least the past decade, and probably since WW2. What was most alarming was that the rate of decline was increasing. Even in social terms the collapse of society and economy was glaringly obvious. Life expectancy had dropped to 61 for men and in economic terms the return per rouble was down to 78.6% of that of 1965. Underutilisation of capital had increased. In 1983 the deputy chairman of GOSPLAN produced a survey of 1600 factories which showed:

". . . a decline in the coefficient of utilisation of existing equipment giving a range of below 50% for 12 Ministries up to an average of 81%."

(quoted in Ticktin.



He focussed on the large number of unfinished construction projects and highlighted the continuing inability of the system to produce high quality, reliable goods.

Andropov's answer was to take Khruschev a bit further. The centralised economy and the bureaucracy must remain but we would have consumer goods and discipline. This pleased the Stalinists no end but was a complete failure, and in any case was nothing new. As early as 1977 in TRUD the Russian economist Sonin argued that the problems of the Soviet factory were reduceable to discipline. In 1983 Zimyanin, one of the Secretaries was reported in Pravda as saying:

"The strengthening of discipline and order.. can only give the necessary result when connected to the whole economic mechanism."

In other words, discipline (the return to Stalin) could not be achieved by terror, even though Andropov's secret police spent a lot of time, to their chagrin, roaming the streets and depositing absentee workers back at their factories. It rapidly became clear that discipline must be enforced not merely by terror but by some form of the Market, the fear of low income, the fear of unemployment, homelessness and the possibilities of wealth through industry. Andropov began slowly to move in this direction. As perhaps a sop to those looking over his shoulder in the direction of Stalin he constantly reaffirmed his commitment to central control and the workers "conscientious work, strict order and discipline". At the Politburo meeting of 1st October 1983 the failure of agricultural production was blamed thus:

"Waste of products is still large, lack of management is exhibited, state and executive discipline is contravened."

Such 'bows in the direction of the men of the apparatus' and the secret police were still needed as he attempted to thread his way towards a policy which would break the Gordian knot. This last group, it is clear were one of the foremost opponents of his policies, not least because of their task of returning queuers to work but also because of the effect on the passivity of the workers.

The Key Element of
Social Control in
Eastern Europe.

However Andropov, in no doubt that the situation was continuing to deteriorate was hamstrung by the large sectors of the bourgeoisie who were unwilling to change from their position under Brezhnev. Andropov as soon as he took power, pointed directly to the change Russia faced, to its inability to introduce new techniques, its waste of resources, poor management, poor labour discipline, overmanning, slack working - in fact all the horrors that the bourgeoisie here in the west constantly rail against. With still large sectors of the bourgeoisie against him and with the near certainty of working class discontent Andropov sought to learn from the West. For the first time there was talk of democracy. For the first time a open statement was made that the USSR suffered economically because of the absence of democracy. There appeared many articles which argued that the working class should be drawn into the process of decision making and the ideas of the Novosibirsk economists were given prominence - even to the extent of publishing their texts arguing for competition and private property. All this was a clear attempt to recruit a cross class alliance between bourgeoisie and workers in the absence of any real material benefits to the latter ie. a Social Contract.

There were attempts to give industries a degree of independence but since these 'reforms' were predicated upon a 'controlled' market, operated from the centre, no real improvement in the standard of living of the workers, and depending upon their willingness to involve themselves in their own exploitation, it failed miserably. The situation continued to deteriorate. The Health Service, by all accounts, had practically collapsed and housing was becoming scarcer than ever before. Harvests continued to fail. The Old Guard were loudly demanding an end to this confusion when Andropov died. There then followed a bitter struggle within the upper echelons of the bourgeoisie about what to do next. At the end of it, via one short lived General Secretary, Gorbachov came to power.

Since the 'year of the three General Secretaries' it has become clear to almost all fractions of the Russian Bourgeoisie that the economic situation of Russian capital has grown much worse since the beginning of the decade, indeed it is now clear that the problem is terminal unless something very drastic indeed is done - and quickly.

In a recent address to the Central Committee Gorbachov gave them not more than three years to complete the 'radical' transformation of management that he considers essential if Russian capital is to survive. Thus two things have changed since Andropov. The situation is much worse, and declining rapidly and, much more importantly many of those sections of the bourgeoisie who throughout the Seventies, bitterly opposed the move to the market in favour of Stalinist policies have now, perhaps too late, been converted to these policies.

In almost his very first speech after taking power Gorbachov concentrated on the effects of the crisis, remarking that Russia produces more cement than anyone else but has a massive shortage of cement and of housing, more steel but of such poor quality that much of it goes to waste, that factories take for ever to build and then produce goods which are largely substandard where they are not useless before they even leave the factory. In 1986 the Russian economist G. Sorokin spoke of a decline in

return to funds invested of some 75% and a growth of goods remaining in circulation of 15% and 15% growth of incomplete projects throughout the Brezhnev period. The coefficient of utilisation of machinery declined by 13% while the rate of return to that machinery declined by 34%. At the 1986 Congress was related the tale of the factory which upon completion proceeded to produce machinery that was already out of date. These are the problems which Gorbachov, on taking power has placed at the forefront of his policy.

First he got rid of all those who still refused to accept the seriousness of the crisis and who refused to accept his solutions. The political bloodbath has been enormous. Half of the eighty ministers, including the Prime minister were almost immediately replaced and 46 out of the 157 regional party secretaries lost their jobs. He has already this year begun a purge of those military commanders who will not go along with him and almost every month we hear of yet further assaults on the hierarchy of the state in one or other of the republics.

Why is it then that Gorbachov has been able to carry out this devastation of state personnel, the essential foundation for his attempts to move to the market and restructure Russian industry. The answer becomes clear when we look at who has replaced the fallen bureaucrats.

The key to Gorbachov's success so far has been the backing of the very institution of power in Russia which is at one and the same time the most powerful and most restrictive - the secret police. Looking at who has been promoted it is difficult to avoid believing that the KGB has taken power in Russia. And yet this was the institution which, above all others has consistently opposed any 'loosening' of state control and central plans since Khrushchev. Paradoxically the answer lies in the very pervasiveness of the KGB's hold on Russian society. By means of their enormous system of repression and information they are uniquely placed to know, far better than any other state institution just how bad things are, and are getting. Thus, paradoxically they are the precise section of the Russian bourgeoisie who are now clearest about the catastrophe that faces them. Thus from being opponents of change they have become the Praetorian Guard of the new regime, in effect the ruling elite of the Russian bourgeoisie. The deal, if deal it was, is simple. In exchange for supporting the policy of perestroika they can run it.

With such support and in such a dire situation Gorbachov has the best backing possible. This is of course not to say that there are still not large numbers of the Russian bourgeoisie waiting for him to fail; but this time they will give him a chance.

A chance to do what? Well, the policy of perestroika is precisely the move to a market situation, slowly and under control which will allow the disciplining of the proletariat, the creation of consumer goods to buy off the managerial strata and encourage those workers in work to work harder and the creation of profit to purchase more new technology to complete the circle. In other words the same solutions as Andropov. And once again it is Aganbegyan who has spelled out the key policies, but now from his new vantage point as house economist to the new regime. He doesn't call it a 'market' that would be too radical, in print at least, but he calls in the first instance

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for the abolition of subsidies on food, the reintroduction of authentic money in order to force the workers to work harder for their income, the introduction of 'realistic' rents and the acceptance of unemployment for those workers who are not needed or will not accept the new system. Health care will remain free but a new additional system will be created which will be supported by patients' contributions.

On the production front state orders for goods will become open to tender from a variety of enterprises with the profits and workers wages producing local taxes for use in the locale, ie based on the profitability of the local enterprises. In the factory new quality control, either centrally or factory based will now reject sub-standard goods with payment based solely on accepted goods produced.

Readers in Britain will note the similarity in many respects to the 'new reality' of Thatcherite policies over the past nine years and a number of western commentators have noted the borrowing that Gorbachov has done from the attempts of the British bourgeoisie to discipline and pauperise the British working class.

Already these attacks on the living standards of Russian workers have brought force responses. As Martin Walker commented in the *Guardian* recently:

"Last week one of my few Russian friends who actually works in a factory...suggested that the country was probably closer to a proletarian revolution than at any time since 1917. He blamed the new 'gospriemka', the new independent quality control board, which is rejecting a terrifying proportion of the goods coming off the assembly lines. This means targets not met, which means no bonus payments to the workers, which means that monthly pay packets are plummeting down from 250-300 roubles to a basic pay of about R180."

While this might as yet be a bit optimistic, it is certainly true that factories are in a ferment and in some of the republics there have been city wide riots with much loss of property through fire and looting which have had to have the police and the army brought in and entire cities sealed off.

Much of this has, in the Russian press been blamed on the reemergence of nationalist feelings or the dismay of corrupt officials being sacked in the present wave of sackings but there would certainly appear to be a class response even at this early stage to the new policies. This is not however to say that the bourgeoisie intend just brutally going ahead with the stick without some form of a carrot. No, they may have absolutely no consumer goods available as yet to sell to those workers who are being asked to respond positively and work harder in their brigade systems. This will, they hope, come later. For the moment, as Aganbegyan put it, at present the only thing they can offer is food and the bourgeoisie intend to first transform agriculture even if it means using scarce foreign currency to buy from abroad, so as to show the workers that if they accept harder conditions and more exploitation there will indeed be something in return - even if it's only more bread and vegetables

In the same speech however, Aganbegyan also spoke about the next stage:

"We have 45,000 enterprises in the Soviet Union and it would be very useful to close several thousand of them tomorrow."

"I can name several mining enterprises... which have no economic justification at all....I don't understand this kind of situation because it makes no economic sense to keep them going...it would be easier to bulldoze them away and build something new."

Aganbegyan is now on the Central Committee.

All this sounds only too familiar to anyone who remembers MacGregor during the Miners Strike or have listened to the likes of Nicholas Ridley over the past decade. East and west the bourgeoisie face the same problem and, essentially, come up with the same solution, increased exploitation of the workers to keep their rotting system alive.

And so the Russian capitalist class is facing the same world wide crisis of capitalist production that the western capitalist class is and, is, essentially trying the same worker smashing policies as they are. Can they succeed? Well,

Conning the Workers
Russian Style.



Gorbachev meets the workers... promising to raise the quality of life.

they have an even greater task than the bourgeoisie of the West. Their economic base is much weaker and much more backward and their proletariat much more concentrated. Even in terms of the specific tactics Gorbachov has undertaken, removing the old guard from power, even if he still has Gromyko parading as a devotee of democracy wont help him. To introduce a new way of working its not enough to change the personnel at the very top. The social relationship within the enterprise itself must be altered and that means taking on the managerial elements of the bourgeoisie, the very section that Gorbachov started off the Perestroika, by massively increasing their salaries so that they would back him in the new way of working and the attack on the workers. Secondly there is no capital to pay for the desperately needed new machinery available only from the West. Even in the best of years the sale of oil allowed a level of purchase sufficient only to maintain and develop the highly technological military enterprise system. How then,

even if the sales of oil start up again if the price goes back to what it was, will the purchase of an entire new level of technology be funded. There is no repeat of 1945 with the physical plunder of Eastern Europe and Germany available, well not without invading the West anyhow.

Without the technology Gorbachov has only the exhortations and the threats. Just as in the west its too late to save the system without war and, though they may not be aware of it yet thats the only solution to the crisis WORLDWIDE. And in Russia, just as in the west the proletariat, as the attack on them deepens will have the potentiality to fight back against their immiseration, fight back against the bourgeoisie and their system so to destroy it before it destroys them.

Ingram

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British Revolutionaries of the 1930s

What will History say?
 History will as usual tell lies.
 (Shaw)

Well yes and no. Men tell lies. Classes tell lies. They use historical narrative to promote particular interests, to destroy others. Lies are endemic to the process of class struggle. At times the "lies of history" assume monstrous proportions. Victims are left for dead and finally the victorious class tries to bury them hoping that by hiding them from sight all knowledge of the defeated will be lost to history.

The working class and its militants have suffered thus at the hands of the bourgeoisie's ideologues. They have done their best to suppress, hide and bury the traditions of the proletariat. Lies have been told about Chartism, the Commune, the Russian Revolution and more recently the miners' strike. These are only a few of thousands of possible examples which all have one thing in common: destruction of the historical traditions of the working class's struggle. Revolutionaries should not stand idly by in this battle. Part of the struggle for the constitution of the proletariat as a revolutionary force is taking its real history back to it. By rescuing our "dead" from the graveyard dug by the bourgeoisie we draw forth the lessons of the past, we clarify the present and we build an alternative tradition which challenges the lies propagated by the bourgeoisie.

It is heartening to see how seriously WILDCAT has taken this responsibility. Its pamphlet Class War on the Home Front returns to the proletarian one moment of its revolutionary history, that of the Anti-Parliamentary Communist Federation (APCF). This organisation was based in Scotland and grew out of those elements which had opposed the Third International's call for participation in parliamentary action. Guy Aldred was one of the leading figures in the movement. Although it included those who had been in the Glasgow Anarchist Group it was not an anti-Bolshevik coalition, although subsequently it turned against the "Bolshevik state". The APCF is much less well known than those of the Italian and German Left Communist traditions. Nonetheless, a careful study of the articles reprinted in this pamphlet clearly illustrates that a genuine revolutionary organisation was alive and well (relatively) and living in Britain in the 1920s-1930s. The fact that it failed to develop continuity on a par with that of the Italian tradition is not in itself a denial of its revolutionary nature nor an indication that it was more confused than its European counterparts. Before any such judgements can be made one must know not only the general programme of the APCF but also the context within which it was promulgated. To reject the APCF simply because it failed to survive the Second World War and has not left any direct descendants is to fall into the bourgeois syndrome of only the "victorious" are worthy of

notice. There are no necessary historical reasons why a clear proletarian group must survive. Defeat and dissolution are just as much part of proletarian history as is "organic continuity".

The APCF did achieve political clarity. This is apparent from the fact that it disseminated a notion of the decadence of capital. This idea stood at the heart of the critique of capital which was made by revolutionaries in the years



immediately following the end of the First World War. The idea of decadence of capital showed, and continues to show, that the era of proletarian revolution was at hand. Despite the fact that the APCF characterised itself as an anarcho-marxist it is clear that it conceived decadence in historical terms, drawn from a marxist tradition rather than the world of moral absolutes so often found in the history of anarchism. In its call to Anti-Parliamentarians (1940) the APCF said,

"During the upswing period of capitalism, when it was developing and expanding, it was possible to grant concessions to the working class because of the increase in productivity and the resultant increase in profits . . . The present period of capitalist decline is one in which no concessions are possible for the working class. . . Democracy, Parliamentarianism and Parliamentary organisation become obsolete and cannot be tolerated." (pp. 21-22.)

In other words the age of reformism had passed. This meant that organisations which had formerly been part of the working class movement were henceforward part of capital most notably, trade unions. Trade unions, said the APCF, "were formed on a craft basis and only around the commodity, not the class-struggle" (p.15) Consequently, revolutionaries could no longer work within them, trying to move them leftward into revolutionary

positions. By their very nature they were beyond recall into the revolutionary struggle. But the APCF realised that the economic struggle still remained the focal point for class-political activity. Unlike the Socialist Party of Great Britain the APCF did not fall into the cretinism of viewing the daily struggle as independent of and separate from the political. It believed that it was in the economic struggle that the working class forged its political consciousness: "by such training, they must pass to the ATTACK and destroy the coercive power of the ruling class". (p.17)

We might quarrel with the sophistication of the arguments which the APCF used to demonstrate the validity of the notion of decadence and its consequences but the fact that it was struggling for clarity on the question is proof of its revolutionary credentials.

The APCF had taken in lessons of the working class's struggle. Rejecting parliament and trade unions it recognised that the proletariat had itself created organisational forms appropriate to the era of revolution these were "all-in Soviets and Councils of Action". It was within these forms that the working class was to develop its consciousness and become a class which was self-reliant, a class for itself.

These elements of clarity which are found in the programme of the APCF came together in the years of war and emerged as a full-blown opposition to the imperialist slaughter of 1939-45. It should be noted that this opposition, which was not

pacifist, was as strong after Russia entered the bloody battle. What was true in 1914 was also the case in 1939: revolutionary credentials were gauged by the extent to which an organisation opposed inter-imperialist war. In 1914 Lenin's stand was a beacon in an otherwise dark world. The war had to be opposed; it had to be turned into a class civil war because the proletariat had nothing to gain from inter imperialist struggle.

The APCF issued its call to Anti-Parliamentarians in 1940, in the midst of war. This was a time when many thousands of working class militants had been seduced into defending one of two positions: either they defended democracy against fascism or they sided with Russia which had not then entered the war (it had signed a "non-aggression" pact with Germany). The APCF was not fooled by either of these positions. It recognised that both were anti-working class.

Despite the fact that the APCF had been the victim of profound confusion during the Spanish Civil War (see below) it was able to draw itself back from the brink of reaction and adopt a revolutionary stance. It rejected the idea that the war against German fascism was a question of defending the lesser-evil of democracy against fascism nor was it a question of looking for guidance to the so-called Socialist Fatherland of Russia. In 1942, after Russia had entered the war, the APCF took up a stand which puts it on the side which Lenin had defended in 1914. The anti-parliamentarians called for,

"victory over Hitlerism and Mikadoism - by the German and Japanese workers, and the simultaneous overthrow of all Allied Imperialists by the workers in Britain and America. We also wish to see the re-institution of the Workers's Soviets in Russia and the demolition of the Stalinist bureaucracy. In a word, we fight for the destruction of ALL imperialism by the Proletarian World Revolution." (p.51)

Isn't this in the same spirit of Lenin when he had written,

"Transform the present imperialist war into a civil war - is the only correct proletarian slogan . . . However difficult such a transformation may appear at any given time Socialists will never relinquish systematic persistent, undeviating, preparatory work in this direction, since war has become a fact."

Make no mistake, to take a stand against the war in the 1940s was no easy matter. Not only had revolutionaries to cope with ideological struggle for clarity, the forces of the British state it had also to face up to the major threat posed by the agents of Stalinism. Among these was the Communist (sic) Party. After Russia entered the war the CP branded all those who refused to fight fascism as enemies who not only had to be attacked in print but also had to be named and if possible executed.

The APCF was neither intimidated nor fooled. Its ability to come out against the war despite worldwide campaigns waged by Stalinists and Trotskyists is a sign of the Federation's revolutionary worth. Opposition to the siren calls of these two anti-working class currents was based upon an emergent critique of Russia which characterised it as a form of state capitalism. This capitalist formation was born from the ruins of the Revolution



and built upon the lives of tens of thousands of workers:

"The defeat of the proletariat in Germany in 1919 and 1923 was instrumental in abandoning the idea of World Revolution, and the Russian Dictatorship of the Proletariat was supplanted by Dictatorship of the Communist Bureaucracy." (p.19)

Once again we might take issue with some of the arguments used to show the capitalist nature of Russia (the APCF drew much of its theoretical programme from the work of Paul Mattick). But as with the broad notion of decadence so with the notion of state capitalist Russia: the APCF had grasped the fundamental lesson that the working class no longer held any power in Russia and that irrespective what Trotskyists said the fact of the eradication of private capital was not in itself an indication of a working class economic structure. This pernicious lie which was and continues to be propagated by leftists was a major ideological weapon used by the Soviet bourgeoisie's ideologies to dupe the working class.

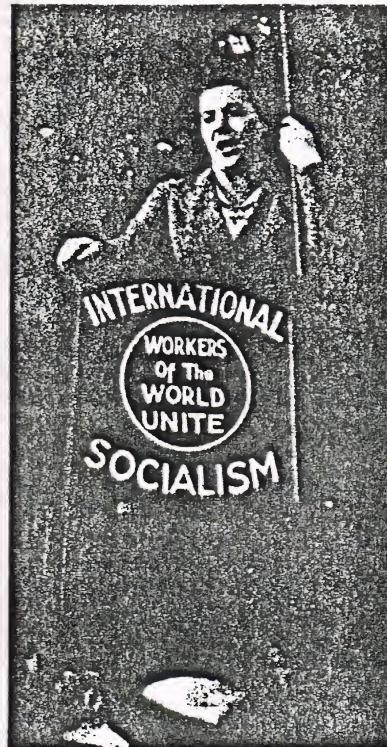
Overall, these positions of the APCF are not minor. They locate it firmly within the revolutionary tradition. It was one of a very small number of groups with kept the banner of communism flying in the dark days of the 1930s.

It was of course subject to a variety of weaknesses both in their practise and in their theory. It was an error for the organisation to see itself as a blend of the best of marxism and anarchism. The fact that the APCF in part grew out of the Glasgow Anarchist Group helps explain why it attempted to square this particular circle. The very fact that the anarchist elements were able to unite with others in the light of the lessons of the struggle in Russia (APCF was formed 1923) indicates how far they ceased to be in thrall to the individualist philosophy of anarchism. The APCF allied itself with the marxist Workers' Communist Party of Germany. Some revolutionaries now argue that the KAPD was anarcho syndicalist and that it failed to recognise the absolute need for the revolutionary party. This is a confusion and/or a lie (see Bulletin 3 pp.33-41). Like the KAPD the APCF did not reject the need for a distinct revolutionary organisation:

"Against the intellectual resources and material organisation of the bourgeoisie we must erect an organisation which cannot spring up overnight, because of the nature of things, but which must be created by the struggle of years and decades. We must bring consciousness to the class struggle. We must build the party, the only means of bringing that consciousness." (p.69)

There is, however, no doubt that the anarchistic tone of the organisation played a major part in leading the APCF towards the defence of reaction during the Spanish Civil War. The anti-parliamentarians were not the only revolutionaries to be duped by capital during this imperialist struggle. The way they were fooled does point to particular confusions. In their introduction to the APCF's Spanish Civil War texts WILDCAT editors write that "it is said that such was the domination the anarchist elements established in the APCF at this time that the marxist members were at one stage banned from speaking for the group on its public platform". (p.28) Unfortunately we are not told who "said" this nor are we directed to

Ethel MacDonald - a leading Glasgow Anti-Parliamentarian.



Ethel MacDonald addressing a Sunday meeting in Hyde Park, July 1938.

material which might enlighten us. Not very useful editorial work. If this hearsay is in fact accurate then it is well worth documenting not only to highlight the confusions of the APCF but also to clarify any opposition which might have stood out against the anarchistic strands. However, irrespective of this particular editorial weakness it remains clear that the APCF was profoundly confused by the war in Spain. It was unable to take up a consistently critical stance to the republicanism and reformism which sided with and was the heart of the anti-fascist side of the struggle. Like thousands of others and like many communists the APCF was totally (or was it?) lost in the face of the mass militancy in Spain, militancy which was harnessed to imperialist ends. The anti-parliamentarians supported the completely reactionary CNT-FAI and at the same time fell into the trap of calling on the British state to "drop its policy of non-intervention". (p.29) The fact that it did not, unlike the Communist Parties, manage to mobilise thousands to fight in Spain does not wipe away this major weakness. The anti-fascist stance which swept through the

working class in 1936 was important in helping mobilise the proletariat for the slaughter of the 1940s.

But as we have seen the debacle of Spain did not destroy the organisation. It did learn lessons. It did fight against the threat of falling into reformism. There were moments when it seemed as if the organisation might relapse into reactionary stance (see for example p.43 and the ambiguity of arguments being put forward on Russia by a member). Indeed, a case could be made out for the APCF's commitment to openness in discussion might be taken as an inherent weakness. This is not to say that openness is by definition a weakness. It is not, a fact which the CBG has argued at some length in previous *Bulletins*. But the point is to whom do you address this openness. At an organisational level it must be within the one milieu that is, the revolutionary movement. The degeneration which undermined the political fractions of the working class in the 1920s-30s made recognition of this movement very difficult. There is a "feeling" (admittedly a very imprecise critical point) when reading the APCF's call for openness that it is directing itself to reactionary organisations. This, given the context of degeneration,

should hardly surprise us. It remains an impossible question to answer whether the call for openness in the 1940s would have resulted in a moment of class collaboration, as it had in 1936, if there had been, as expected, a wave of class militancy over Europe. Unlike 1918 the end of the war was not followed by a revolutionary surge. A Labour Government was elected in Britain. Once again the politics of reformism swept over the working class. The post war period got underway and slowly built towards the economic "miracle" of full employment and "consumerism". In this process revolutionaries found themselves isolated. A tradition was destroyed and many revolutionaries succumbed to the ideology of reformism, most notably in the context of the APCF is the sad degeneration of Guy Aldred. Nonetheless, this decline should not be allowed to obscure an important moment in the proletariat's history. All those who now aspire to take up the revolutionary banner should acquaint themselves with their history. Read this pamphlet.

Flett

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NOTE:

We have intentionally avoided here writing an extended critical piece on the editorial work of WILDCAT. This is because we think the reprinting of the APCF texts are of paramount importance for the reasons we state in the introduction to this review. Criticisms could be aimed at the editorial work of WILDCAT: there is a peculiarly un-historical approach to the growth of Council Communism, a tendency to project the notion backwards and forwards with little regard for the formative context of the specific notion; but a lot of regard for picking and choosing ones political progenitors. There is no simple moral ground upon which we can decide to stand from which we can disown all others who do not match up to our demands. Proletarian history is a complex process of development which encompasses a variety of stances which hold within them any number of starting points. Thus to isolate in an artificial manner what they deem to be Council Communist WILDCAT rupture the reality of the working class's history. The worst example of this approach is seen in its treatment of Bolshevism.

WILDCAT seem to be unable to surmount the anti-Bolshevik stance which was to be found in the politics of Mattick, Ruhle et al in the 1930s. This stance does not see the Bolsheviks as a reactionary group in the '30s but as part of capital from its inception. Hence the "Bolshevik Revolution" was from the very beginning said to be a capitalist one. WILDCAT's reluctance to accept the proletarian credentials of the Bolshevik Party would seem to stem from this Council Communist approach. For example no mention is made of the definitive stance taken by Lenin in 1914 against the war. And again, it seems significant the way WILDCAT go for a simplistic analysis of the way party and class developed in Russia: "The example of Russia shows what happens when revolutionary leadership passes into the hands of a political party". (p.60) WILDCAT should pay closer attention to the texts which they themselves have reprinted and give up its mealy-mouthed approach to the Bolshevik Party and what it calls its "bloody dictatorship". (p.59) Bourgeois history tells lies, don't compound the problem by taking these into the communist movement.

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Blast From The Past

Workers of the World Unite.

SOLIDARITY

You have nothing to lose but your chains:
You have a world to win. (Marx)

To Anti-parliamentarians

For many years the left communist groups have been spoken of as Anti-Parliamentarians due to their opposition to parliamentary activity. We, as a matter of fact, have the title A.P.C.F. During the reformist era of capitalism this title although long-winded was quite correct. It differentiated us from the parliamentary socialists in the labour movement.

During the upswing period of capitalism, when it was developing and expanding, it was possible to grant concessions to the working class because of the increase in productivity and the resultant increase in profits. These reforms however, were seldom granted without much struggle. There were victories and defeats in both wings of the movement.

The present period of capitalist decline is one in which no concessions are possible for the working class. Further, we have definitely left the era of democracy, the era of free competition. This democracy which served the conflicting interests of small capitalists during the developing stage, is now no longer compatible. Monopoly capitalism in a period of permanent crisis and war finds dictatorship and terror the only means to ensure it a tranquil proletariat. The abolition of the right to strike and its "fifth column" activity - despite the fact that it has completely captured the official Trade Union and Labour Party organisation - demonstrates this excellently.

Democracy, Parliamentarism and the Parliamentary organisation became obsolete and cannot be tolerated. Britain follows Germany in putting forward only one candidate for election. Fascism is being introduced with the aid of the Labour Party which is completely incapable of taking an independent working class position.

This development renders the controversy of the parliamentarians in the movement with the left communist groups obsolete. The name anti-parliamentary therefore is historically outdated and should be discarded. In its place the better title council communism should be used as

it designates as a name the major principle difference between the old and new labour movement. This difference on the role that organisation plays in the class struggle and in the revolution is of increasing importance, while the question of parliamentary activity is of very much decreasing importance.

In contradistinction to the old form of party organisation, universally common to the parliamentary politicians in the old labour movement, the new labour movement holds that the workers' committees, the soviets, the workers' councils of action, are the real fighting organisations of the working class.

Therefore let us pass the name A.P.C.F. into the keeping of history.

Let all similar groups likewise discard their sectarian labels and unite under a common banner. Co-ordination is becoming a vital necessity to make the best use of our combined resources. Meantime, with group autonomy, let us all adopt, say, the name The Council Communists, so that under this banner the scattered revolutionary groups can gather together as groups of council communists capable of aiding the workers in the struggle. When a lead is necessary, giving a lead; where criticism is necessary, giving criticism. But all the time remembering that this is a class struggle and the class needs of the workers transcend all.

The banner of revolutionary non-compromise is the banner of the successful social revolution.

To this banner we recall the old Anti-Parliamentarians, whose experience of the past and whose comradeship is now so necessary. To this banner we call the youth who suffer the effects of capitalist war.

Now is the time to build the shock troops of the coming socialist revolution.

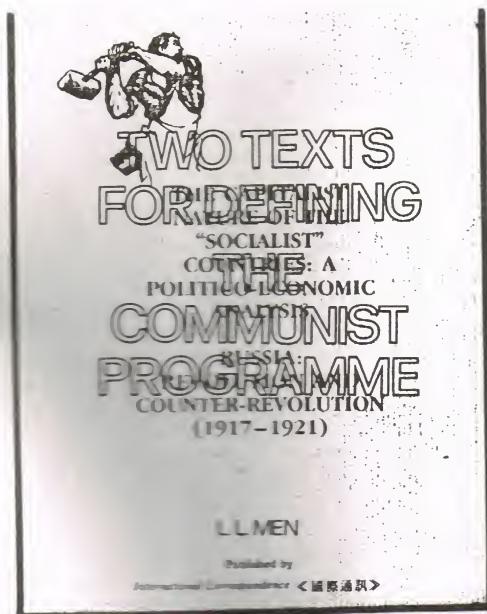
Pending the final show-down with capitalism there will arise many issues on which all revolutionaries, irrespective of section, SHOULD agree. For such objects we ought to put our party loyalty second to class loyalty which all profess, in order to attain the maximum possible striking power. To do otherwise, as is all too common, is a dereliction of class duty.

(September-October 1940)

**BACK
ISSUES»»**

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Aberdeen
U.K.**

REVIEW



LLM is a communist living in Hong Kong who produces the magazine "International Correspondence" and who has been a contributor to the Communist Bulletin on a number of occasions. He has, over the years been particularly keen to have a body of material available in Chinese in preparation for class movements within China, so that Chinese workers et. alia., whose struggle against the Chinese bourgeoisie may force them towards Communist positions will have political material defending such communist positions available. With this milieu in mind LLM has written and published, in Chinese, texts on the nature of the transition period, State Capitalism and the capitalist nature of Russia; to serve as an explanation of the economy and class nature of the so-called 'socialist countries' and on the defeat and degeneration of the revolution in Russia; to explain the means by which the first proletarian revolution was defeated and transformed into rule by a new bourgeoisie.

He has now provided reworked versions of both these texts in a book in English. (Two Texts for Defining the Communist Programme. £4.50 from either the CBG or direct from LLM - address below.)

The work is substantial, detailed, and, as previous extracts printed in Bulletin Nine shows, illuminating in very many respects. However, reading it, one is often forcibly reminded of the little girl in the nursery rhyme 'when she was good she was very, very good and when she was bad she was.....'

What the book is good on is historical analysis and theoretical exposition.

First of all, why these two areas. At first glance they seem disparate, but there is indeed a unity and this unity operates at two levels. In the first place these are the anticipated concerns of militants emerging from the so-called 'socialist' milieu of China, areas of 'socialist' ideology which have to be broken if such militants are to get to grips with communist positions, the nature of State Capitalism, why they are not socialist, not 'tra-

nsitional' to communism, Stalin and the defeat of the proletariat in Russia. At another level they form a whole in being both (in the first text) a theoretical, and (in the second text) a historical exposition of how the proletariat should, and did, attempt to destroy bourgeois and capitalist relations and must, and tried to, substitute socialism.

The first text 'The Capitalist Nature of the "Socialist" Countries: A Politico-Economic Analysis' attempts to answer three questions.

1. What exactly defines the Socialist economy?
2. What defines the capitalist mode of production?
3. Is Russia (and China) socialist, capitalist or what?

There follows a substantial exposition of what LLM considers to be the essential features of capitalism.

1. Private ownership of the means of production
2. Value and commodities
3. Society being divided into two main classes, one owning the means of production, the other, the actual producers, not.
4. Labour power being a commodity.

and there follows an attempt to demonstrate the capitalist nature of Russia. As the author says:

"I had been unable to prove that these societies are capitalist in a way that is completely satisfactory in terms of Marxist theory.....and....." The following text.....is an attempt to provide the above mentioned proof."

Leaving aside for the moment the notion of proof, the text goes into Stalinist rationalities for defining their systems as socialist and does an extremely good hatchet job on all the banalities of 'socialist price' and the like. Where however this section of the text falls down is where it turns from hammering the Stalinist economists to identifying the crucial elements of capitalist economy one has to identify in Russia and China in order to demonstrate their capitalist nature. LLM spends some time slagging leftists such as

Cliff and Bettleheim for presenting, in effect, price tickets, for proof but, sadly, does very much the same by presenting the reader with a similar list of items which must be demonstrably evident in these countries before we can 'prove' them 'capitalist'. He also lambasts the rest of the communist milieu for failing to do this job (see also below). However he has fallen into the same trap as the leftists and it is no surprise that his exposition of 'price', 'exchange' and all the rest in Russia is no less convincing than theirs. The CWO in their text in RP7 "The Crisis of Comecon" away back in the Seventies put it best. All that is really needed to demonstrate the essence of capitalist relations in a demonstration of commodity production, of exchange between the classes in commodity production, of wage labour and the existence of a bourgeoisie and proletariat. LLM castigates the ICC and the CWO thus for failing to carry out a job which is not needed.

In the final section of the text LLM asks the question - if Russia and China and the other so-called 'socialist' countries are capitalist, just as the countries of the west are, what then defines the economic basis of socialism, what is socialism? At root he says:

"capitalist production...has developed spontaneously. In contrast socialist production is, and can only be a conscious method."

Essentially, according to LLM, on an economic plane the elimination of price and value as the basis of economic production is the key to the economic basis of socialism. As he puts it:

"The aim of this section...is to concretely show, by means of a simple example, how labour time can be used as the basis of the socialist method of production. Please note, there are certainly more than one ways in which this can be done, the one suggested here may not be the most efficient. But they will all have one common, fundamental feature: the use of direct labour-time as the basis of and measure for production calculation, with which we are concerned in this section, and, subsidiarily, distribution."

There then follows a detailed and complex discussion of labour time certificates and how they are NOT prices.

While the author provides a coherent and persuasive argument for the use of labour time certificates (or vouchers) as a measure for production he fails to provide the evidence to substantiate his claim that this system is also essential for distribution. For an argument here he depends solely on quotations from Marx, which is somewhat bizarre coming from an author who, throughout the book, refers time and time again to the necessity for proof (see also below). He makes much of Marx's distinction between Socialism and Communism. As he says (and quotes):

"In communism 'society inscribes on its banner: From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs'.....but..."

"Socialism is a method of production the banner of which says 'From each according to his ability, to each according to his labour'. Two producers rendering the same quantum of direct labour, receive the same quantum of congealed social labour in the form of means of

consumption. But, "one worker is married, another not; one has more children than another, and so on and so forth. Thus, with an equal performance of labour and hence an equal share in the social consumption fund, one will receive more than another, one will be richer than another, and so on. To avoid all these defects right instead of being equal would have to be unequal. But these defects are inevitable in the first phase of communist society as it is when it has just emerged after prolonged birth pangs from capitalist society. Right can never be higher than the economic structure of society and its cultural development conditioned thereby" (quoting from the Critique of the Gotha Programme).

Thus LLM (and Marx?) argues that distribution will be unequal in socialism based on the system of labour time certificates. From the point of view of a revolution in progress it is, to this reader's mind, difficult to conceive of class conscious proletarians who have just successfully carried out the defeat of capitalism gaily agreeing that a single worker should have as much as another with three, or five or eight dependants. Even 'welfare state' capitalism here in Britain doesn't argue that.. (though in a year or so...?) It has always seemed to this reviewer that some form of allocation based upon rationing was more likely especially when one considers that it is extremely unlikely that any system will be instituted in any circumstances other than that of Civil War and with distribution (and even production) geared solely towards such a situation. LLM does not avoid this question, spending an entire addendum to the text discussing how the labour time certificate system can be introduced and when this can happen. Unfortunately instead of analysing the possibilities of its introduction his conception of the importance for the survival of the proletarian dictatorship of its introduction means that he ends up arguing only that it MUST be for socialism to survive rather than historically or analytically assessing how and when the circumstances of civil war will allow it to be (as opposed to systems of rationing for example) in the case of distribution or a command system based on 'produce what we need, as much as possible as quickly as possible' so that the bourgeoisie can be defeated, in the realm of production.

The second text "Russia: Revolution and Counter Revolution 1917-1921" is much longer, more illuminating and much more satisfying. The author commences with a long detailed and excellent defence of the proletarian nature of the revolution of 1917 spending much time to good effect repudiating the anarchist and CGBBish categorisation of events in Russia. He then presents an analytical framework and method for assessing the rise and fall of the proletarian dictatorship in Russia. Key sections of this exposition have already been published in Bulletin Nine so I do not propose to go into this area in depth again here other than to indicate that LLM identifies the essential nature of the proletarian dictatorship as expressed by the historic experience of our class itself (instead of as imagined by the reflection of revolutionaries) referring to this as the 'Paris Commune Principle'.

"Not only are the soviets which simultaneously possess both form and content....the historically discovered means with which to establish dual power, in the wake of the seizure of power, which is itself carried out and mandated by the soviet network, they provide the basis upon which the proletariat establishes its

dictatorship. Thus the dictatorship of the proletariat takes the form of a commune-state. In contrast to the capitalist state, the workers' state is "to be a working, not a parliamentary, body, executive and legislative at the same time".

" It has to be pointed out immediately that by having all state functionaries wielding actual power delegated by the workers themselves and by "declaring them all, without exception subject to recall at any moment" is not only a purely political question, it is at the same time also a politico-economic question. This is because if the commune-state nationalises the means of production, it will become their owner. If the Paris Commune principle is vigilantly endorsed (which requires a high level of revolutionary consciousness on the part of the mass of workers), as the real holders of state power workers become the communal owners of the means of production. But, if the Paris Commune principle is not upheld, then, from the point of view of actual social relations and not from the point of view of juridical categories, state power will still leave the hands of state functionaries who will have become divorced from the workers and immune from their control. In which case, in terms of the social relations of production, the producers will become separated from the means of production which now become owned de facto by the state functionaries and not by the working class communally".

" The Paris Commune principle does not only mean that the All-Russian Congress of Soviets (to use the Russian Revolution as example) has to be elected by the workers from bottom up, it means that all state functionaries at all levels of the soviet structure who wield actual power have to be delegated from bottom up by the workers themselves or by them through their delegates who are themselves elected by means of the same process.

" In other words state members at every level are not to be appointed from top down by other state members occupying positions at higher levels of the soviet structure. The same applies to the power of recall. This is not to say that state members at higher levels cannot appoint advisors to lower level soviets, but these..must remain as advisors only, and must not be allowed to wield actual power. Otherwise the Paris Commune principle will only become a dead letter, even if state members occupying positions at the apex of the soviet structure are themselves originally elected from the bottom up."

" The basis of the Paris Commune principle is neither idealistic nor moralistic, it is the defining criterion of the dictatorship of the proletariat. It is the only way in which workers can actually hold state power themselves.

There follows a detailed discussion of both the economic theory and practice of the revolution in Russia in industry and agriculture and the organisation of the Soviet Government: Theory and Practice of the revolution which seeks to examine the real experience of the proletariat in Russia and how what happened may be judged essentially against the essential nature of the Paris Commune principle and the dictatorship of the proletariat. LLM details how the organisation of the state degenerated from these essential prerequisites of proletarian power and contributed substantially to

the elimination from positions of power of any representatives of the proletariat and the eventual defeat of the proletarian revolution. LLM details in his analysis of the Vesennaya and the Soviets how the principle of election and the rule of the proletariat was progressively eliminated and ended.

" We have now finished our brief summary of how the Soviet State firstly began as a deformed commune-state, how the soviet system was usurped by an appointed state machine which was divorced from it, and how within the soviets themselves and other state organs all elements of workers democracy were eliminated. By early 1921 at the latest, the working class had lost all control of the state."

LLM then goes on to present a valuable analysis of the relationship between the party, the state and the mass of workers both in theory and in the real experience of the revolution detailing the precise means by which the relationship was transformed, ending up:

"...the formula: the party's dictatorship over the proletariat = (sic) the dictatorship of the proletariat. The 12th Party congress resolved "the dictatorship of the working class cannot be assured otherwise than in the form of the dictatorship of its leading vanguard, ie., the communist party".

All of this excellent, both descriptively and analytically. It is at this point however that we must examine the unity of the two texts at another level. In both his Preface and his Conclusion LLM sets out to use these texts to do two things. First he seeks to identify certain elements as being essential to the communist programme. Thus the proof of the capitalist nature of Russia et alia means:

" the above proof is above all necessary because if we are unable to provide it, we will never know how to build socialism."

Since socialism is "a conscious method":

"If the proletariat's theoreticians do not possess a scientific understanding of the socialist method of production, then after the proletariat has seized power, social production will perforce have to develop spontaneously, which means it can only follow the capitalist method since the latter is the previously existing method....In other words the possession of a scientific understanding of the capitalist method of production is a prerequisite for building socialism. Now, if we are unable to prove that the so-called socialist countries are capitalist...it can only mean that our understanding of capitalism is incomplete."

" This may, or may not be a tortuous piece of logic. More importantly it is open to question whether the existing experience of any form of transition period the proletariat has had so far is sufficient for us - or the class - to be able to unequivocally state what MUST happen next time around. LLM seems at times to go further than just asserting that we must have a programme; he seems at times, though elsewhere he denies this, to declare that the labour time certificate system MUST be adopted if socialism is to succeed at all, as when he says:

"Clearly the labour time voucher system or a similar system is the key (emphasised) element."

and:

"..the introduction of a system such as the labour time certificate system is an indispensable requirement."

As I have noted above, and as LLM himself notes all communists are agreed that socialism must be organised and must mean the elimination of the law of value as the basis for production; I would argue that the class' historic experience of Civil War, let along the transition period, is still so tiny that we cannot possibly pontificate about what the class action of the future itself still has to illuminate for us, though as LLM shows we can certainly indicate what the core elements of socialism are, indicate the basics but the rest is still largely postulation.

Secondly LLM in both texts lambasts the communist milieu for failing to do the job that he has had to do. Vis-a-vis the capitalist nature of the regime in Russia and the economic programme of the transition period all and sundry, having manifestly failed to come up with the vital proof that LLM has, are relegated to the ranks of duffers and idealists. Many of the questions he demands be answered cannot yet be and some of those he claims havent been answered, have indeed been, though clearly not to his satisfaction.

With regard to the second text LLM lays into all and sundry not merely for failing to adequately explain the degeneration of the revolution and for focussing incorrectly on specific areas only, the ICC's isolation from the west, the CWO's substitutionism etc. All very true but he goes beyond this to attack the milieu 'at large' for failing to address 'the question of the Russian Revolution' As he says:

"It is long overdue that such a glaring programmatic deficiency of the Left-Communist Current be redressed."

As of the ICCs and CWOs analyses he says:

"..both analyses being based upon the idealist method are totally ideological."

But I would contend that LLM has also failed to address the real question of the defeat. Essentially he believes that all previous analyses have been fundamentally based upon a subjectivist approach and that it is now necessary to back out of this in order to formulate the correct programme for the transition period, thus linking the two texts in his book at a higher level as one coherent whole.

First of all lets deal with the question of how the milieu has dealt with the 'question of Russia'. It is simply untrue to say that the approach of the milieu over the past fifteen years have been subjectivist or has failed to address the 'real' question. It may or may not have addressed the questions LLM poses but the whole series of questions of the experience of the proletariat during the first revolutionary wave has been looked at again and again by revolutionaries - but at different times, to answer different questions, for different purposes. The various fractions of the communist milieu in the Seventies, for instance didnt carry out such historical analysis for its own sake but looked at the experience

of Russia precisely for the purpose of defining communist positions in order to set the class lines that distinguish the communist movement from the various leftist fractions of the bourgeoisie. - a task which was vitally important in the confusion about what communist positions were that characterised the early days of the rebirth of the communist movement. Certainly it would be true to say that more recently analyses of the revolutionary period in Russia and the degeneration of the wave there have been less concerned to extract lessons for the present and the future than to justify ones own perceived historical progenitors on the absurd basis of 'my forefathers were more right than yours and so I have more reason to exist than you', but this shouldnt hide the fact that such analysis was in the past, and for some of us in the present, to give direction for our present and future activities and not for intellectual or historical divertissement.

Secondly, as I've noted above the real 'lesson' of the revolution in Russia is that of the consciousness of the class. LLM at times attempts to argue that one can examine programme separately from consciousness and sometimes seems to argue that programme equals consciousness:

" We have concretely analysed how the Russian Revolution's erroneous programme actually transformed the Russian State into a bourgeois state and its members (mainly the Bolsheviks) into a state bourgeoisie."

Neither way is a correct way of looking at the experience of our class. In our text Unity and Clarity in the Russian Revolution in Bulletin Nine we attempted to analyse the development of the revolutionary movement in Russia by a historical exposition showing the direct link between the action and thus consciousness of the working class, and the political positions and arguments of revolutionary fractions and how the latter at key points were informed, indeed transformed by the former. To analyse how our class was defeated in Russia requires, at the very least the same approach, an attempt to show how the consciousness of the class and its collapse informed the degeneration of the revolutionary fractions then an analysis of the conditions for the regression of the revolutionary consciousness of the class not merely in Russia but internationally in what was after all an international wave of proletarian revolution.

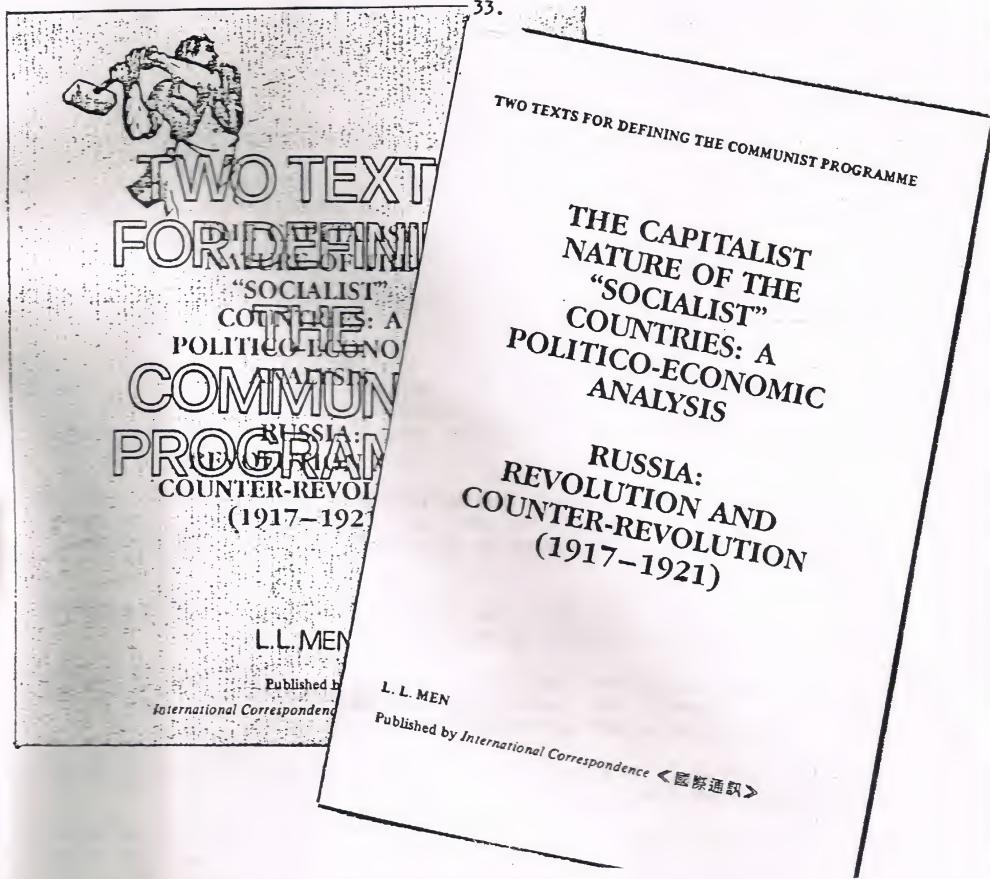
In selecting out one element and declaring it to be the 'key' LLM is, in this respect, no different from all those within the milieu whom he lambasts.

Of necessity this review has focussed to some extent on 'negative' elements ie. on those elements which this reviewer finds LLM could have made clearer or less dogmatically.

However these failings should not be allowed to detract from the very real and important contribution this book makes to our understanding of the political processes of the proletarian dictatorship as presented by the real experience of the class in Russia.

Ingram

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LLM's book can be obtained direct from him
in Hong kong or from the CBG at our group
address. Price £4.00/5 dollars post paid.

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Communist Bulletin Group

The Communist Bulletin Group locates itself within the political tradition generally known as Left Communism - that is, the revolutionary milieu which traces its origins to the left factions which split from the decaying Third International, in particular, the German, Italian and Dutch Left.

We believe that adherence to the following positions are the defining characteristics of the revolutionary communist milieu.

Capitalism, as a mode of production, has been demonstrably decadent since the outbreak of W.W.I. and has nothing to offer now but a catastrophic cycle of crises, global war, followed by a temporary 'boom' located in post-war reconstruction.

The struggle for reforms which was an integral part of the working class' fight for its own interests in the 19th Century, the period of capitalism's ascendancy, is now a bourgeois diversion directed against the working class. The defence of working class interests today can only lead to the overthrow of capitalism, not its reform.

In this era any participation in the parliamentary circus of 'democracy' at any level whatsoever, including the use of parliamentarism as a 'revolutionary tribune', can only be an attack on the consciousness and self organisation of the proletariat.

Today trade unions everywhere, in every guise, are capitalist weapons which attack the proletarian struggle in order to defend capitalism.

There are no progressive factions of capitalism anymore and there can be no 'conditional support' for one faction against another. Therefore any form of 'united front' is an attack on the working class struggle.

Likewise, 'national liberation' struggles have nothing to offer the working class except a shift of alliance from one imperialist bloc to another.

There are no 'socialist' countries in the world today; Russia, China and all the other so-called 'communist' states are simply a particular form of decadent capitalism which will have to be destroyed by the proletarian revolution. All the self-proclaimed 'workers parties', the CP's, the Trotskyists, etc., which provide them with support, however critical or conditional, are in reality, bourgeois parties intent on imposing their own brand of state-capitalism on the working class.

The working class, because it is a collective, exploited class without property of its own to defend, is the only class capable of carrying out the communist revolution. It can only do this by destroying the capitalist state and constituting a dictatorship of the proletariat based on the international power of the workers councils.

The revolutionary part plays an indispensable role by constituting a core of political and programmatic clarity, 'hard as steel, clear as glass' which allows it to undertake the 'political leadership' of the revolutionary struggles of the proletariat.

The C.B.G. believes that this 'core' of the future party is not to be found in any single revolutionary organisation currently existing. It will emerge, hand in hand with the development of the class' own struggles, from a process of fraternal confrontation and clarification involving the whole revolutionary milieu. Therefore revolutionaries today must organise themselves in a fashion which utterly rejects the suppression of this process by monolithic structure internally and by sectarian practice externally.